

Weinbau Zukunft Donauram

Dear Ministers, Your Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, let me thank you for this opportunity to participate at this very important conference devoted to the future of viticulture and oenology in the Danube region. It is an honour for me to present you the current state of viticulture and oenology in the Slovak Republic in the context of the climate change.

Slovakia is a small Central European country. Its unique combination of soil characteristics, climate, altitude, topographic conditions and wide range of vine varieties all add a special characteristic to Slovak wines. Viticulture in Slovakia has a long history and is predominantly concentrated in the southern part of the country, especially across the south, southeast and south-western slopes of the Carpathians. Taking into account that Slovakia is a relatively small country, there are currently six officially recognized wine regions. From the point of view of vine growing, the western part of the Danube region provides conditions particularly suitable for the production of lower quality wines. On the other hand, the eastern part, north, northwest and northeast of the town of Štúrovo provides suitable conditions for the growing of varieties demanding heat and sunshine, thus suitable for the production of high-quality wines.

Varieties of pronounced southern character dominate in the Danube region – Welsh Rizling and Rhein Rizling make the highest percentage. For deep soils, there are typical varieties such as Silvaner gruen, Tramin red and blue varieties of Frankonia or Cabernet Sauvignon. The Pinot type varieties – Pinot blanc, Pinot gris and Pinot noir, as well as Chardonnay are also great. The smallest and most exclusive region is Tokaj, which is limited to just a few municipalities in south-eastern Slovakia and is closely linked to the winemaking region of the same name across the border in Hungary. Strekov and Štúrovo wine regions are also known thanks to the growing of Slovakian new selected and very original varieties, such as Devin and Danube. Recently, wine producers have been reviving old viticulture and winemaking traditions through establishment of wine routes. The Small Carpathian Wine Route, for example, offers a year-round program of events linked to winegrowing and wine-producing activities in the region. The Small Carpathian Wine Route has been very popular not only among local, but also among international tourists.

Dear Excellences,

viticulture, like cultivating any other agricultural commodity, is highly dependent on climate and weather conditions. Climate is the most important natural factor determining the quality of grape production and the quality of wine itself. Farmers around the world feel the effects of climate change. Slovakia is not an exception. It is estimated that during the period from 1881 to 2008, the average annual temperature in Slovakia increased by about 1.6 °Celsius and the average annual rainfall decreased by about 3.4%. In the period from 1995 to 2010, there was a significant increase in the daily precipitation, which resulted in a higher risk of floods in several locations in Slovakia. The impact of climate change is also evident in the phenological phases of vine growing. Over the past 13 years, the sprouting of vine has been delayed by 7 days, whilst the process of flowering has been delayed on average by 20 days. In Slovakia, the effects of climate change are particularly noted in the context of the spread of diseases, extreme weather fluctuations, hydrological conditions, soil erosion, and a change in the vegetation period and an excessive incidence of insects and pests in vineyards.

Slovakia is ready to support the formulation of the Regional Strategy with the aim to define practical steps to respond to impacts of climate change on wine, viticulture and fruit production. We believe that Regional Strategy would contribute to rising awareness and dissemination of expertise about this topic, encourage the debate and the exchange of views among relevant stakeholders and provide guidance for states to put knowledge into practice.

Thank you very much for your attention.